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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* General Assembly discusses question of equitable representation on and increase in membership of Security Council.

* Secretary-General addresses European Parliament in Strasbourg; meets with President of European Union and Commissioner for External Relations.

* International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia indicts six Bosnian Croat officials for persecution of Bosnian Muslims.

* UNEP report says humans are destroying Earth's biodiversity at unprecedented rates; many animal and plant species face extinction.

* As Legal Committee considers Decade of International Law, Russian Federation expands on proposal for peace conference in 1999.

* Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to hold thirteenth session in Geneva from 20 November to 8 December.

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The General Assembly has been considering the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. It has heard calls for democratization of the Council, for more equitable geographical representation on it, for greater transparency in its work, and for limitation, if not elimination, of the veto.

The United States representative told the Assembly that his country was committed to finding the proper overall package of changes to expand the Council. With their record of constructive global influence and their capacity to sustain heavy global responsibilities, Japan and Germany should be permanent members, he said. In fact, the United States could not agree to a Council expansion that did not result in their permanent membership.

The representative of Egypt said the underrepresentation of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Security Council must be addressed. Expansion of the

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Council should not lead to an increase in the number of permanent seats for developed States at the expense of developing ones. The relations of the General Assembly and the Council must be reviewed.

The representative of Kenya yesterday expressed support for expansion of the Council to 25 members. Membership should be based on the principle of equitable geographic representation. Honduras, speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama, said only a Council with a broad membership would have the credibility necessary to spur Member States to participate in the collective responsibility of maintaining peace and security.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg, according to a United Nations spokesman. He also met with the President of the European Union and the Commissioner for External Relations.

The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the European Union would offer assistance in providing ideas and suggestions to solve the United Nations financial crisis. The President said he would bring up the issue of putting the Organization on a sound financial footing at the next summit meeting of the European Council in Madrid in mid-December.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali also met with the Ambassadors of the Arab Maghreb Union based in Brussels, who briefed him on preparations for an upcoming conference in Barcelona on Euro-Mediterranean affairs. He later left Strasbourg for Geneva, where he was due to meet with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso.

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The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has indicted six Bosnian Croat officials for the persecution on political, racial and religious grounds of Bosnian Muslims. Warrants for their arrest were issued yesterday and forwarded to the relevant authorities in Sarajevo, Mostar and Zagreb.

Among the six accused were the Vice-President of the Croatian community of Herceg-Bosna, Dario Kordic, and the Chief of Staff of the Croatian Defence Council, Tihomir Blaskic. They were charged with crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and war crimes.

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Humans are destroying the Earth's biodiversity at unprecedented rates, according to a report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It said that from 5 to 20 per cent of some groups of animal and plant species were threatened with extinction unless present trends were reversed. The report, entitled the Global Biodiversity Assessment, was released today at the second Conference of Parties to the Conference on Biological Diversity, in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The report said the Earth was losing genes and habitats, or ecosystems, at alarming rates. It warned that the loss of biological resources endangered humanity's food supplies, sources of wood, medicines and energy, and opportunities for recreation and tourism. Such loss also interfered with essential ecological functions, such as water run-off, control of soil erosion, assimilation of wastes and water purification.

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The proposed 1999 third international peace conference should focus on the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prevention of armed conflict, the Russian representative told the Sixth Committee (Legal) today as it began consideration of the United Nations Decade of International Law. He recalled that his country had sponsored the 1899 and 1907 Hague Peace Conferences.

Reiterating the proposal made by President Boris Yeltsin at the General Assembly's fiftieth anniversary commemorative session, the Russian representative said the conference should address legal norms of peace enforcement, international sanctions, international humanitarian law and the establishment of an international criminal justice system. The year 1999 would mark the end of the Decade of International Law and would be the one-hundredth anniversary of the first Peace Conference, he noted.

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The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is to hold its thirteenth session in Geneva from 20 November to 8 December. It will consider the measures taken by Colombia, Norway, Mauritius, Ukraine and Algeria to implement the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. A total of 133 States are parties to the Covenant.

The Covenant seeks to promote and protect three kinds of rights -- the right to work in just and favourable conditions; the right to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being; and the right to education and the enjoyment of benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress.

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